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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the development and implementation of the quality audit, a methodology designed to help school systems examine their capacity for change using the principles of total quality management as a framework for analysis. Total quality management stresses the importance of continuous improvement of organizational processes, resulting in the delivery of high quality educational services. Quality is defined by the organization's "customer," the end user of the product, and it requires attention to the entire system. The quality audit uses the features of total quality management as a framework for analyzing the efficacy of school district administrative structures and processes. In operation, a small team of researchers works with a district steering committee to structure the audit and provide ongoing feedback on the way to the final report. The quality audit is not a job analysis. Instead, it takes a more systemic approach. Specific barriers to performance or customer service issues related to particular areas might be identified, but the overall focus is on the delineation of themes across functions. Over the past 7 years, the quality audit has been used in a dozen school systems. Data from one suburban district are used to illustrate the process. A consistent theme is the extent to which central office and school administrative functions need to be delivered with a focus on customer service. Findings in the district highlighted reflect breakdowns in the delivery of quality support services that over time produced anxiety, antipathy, and low morale. As a result of the quality audit, the district experienced a remarkable degree of change. Areas in need of attention were identified and organizational members collaborated in dialogue about change. An appendix contains the school climate survey used in the audit. (Contains 21 references.) (SLD)

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The Quality Audit: A Framework for Internal Analysis of the Capacity for Change

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Running head: QUALITY AUDIT

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The Quality Audit: A Framework for Internal Analysis of the Capacity for Change

Strategic planning has experienced something of a resurgence in education over the past decade and a half (Rieger 1995). In some respects, its impact is felt more widely than more recognized change initiatives like site based management or school choice. A strategic plan helps a district define its desired future; it is both a vision and a road map for getting there. A critical, though often neglected, element of strategic planning in education is conducting an "internal scan" or audit of organizational structures and processes.

Many districts try to move toward the future without adequate preparation for the change effort. The internal scan provides a foundation for strategy development and action planning and a realistic preview of the capacity of the organizational system to support change activity. It also highlights potential bottlenecks to planned change activities and makes explicit key leverage points for supporting change.

This paper reports on the development and implementation of *the quality audit*, a methodology designed to help school systems examine their capacity for change using the principles of total quality management as a framework for analysis. We will first describe the features of total quality systems that provide the conceptual framework for the audit. The typical methodology used to conduct the audit is then outlined, followed by a discussion of the content areas investigated. A specific district's experiences will be used to describe the methodology itself and highlight its potential as a tool in strategic change activity.

Framework

The administrative structures and processes of any organization can be considered a success insofar as they support and contribute to attaining the organization's goals and objectives. A school district, like any organization, may adopt a variety of structures to achieve the same objectives (Galbraith, 1977). Each alternative structure will have accompanying strengths and weaknesses. The

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task, then, is to select the structure which best fits the vision of the district and insures that the district provides effective leadership at all levels of the organization in support of the district's strategic goals (Nadler and Tushman, 1992).

The audit uses the principles of total quality management as a framework for examining these questions (for an overview, see Bonstingl, 1992; Clemmer, 1992; Sashkin and Kiser, 1993). Total quality stresses the importance of continuous improvement of organizational processes, resulting in the delivery of high quality educational services (Schmidt and Finnigan, 1993). For purposes of understanding the audit, it is important to understand the features of total quality management and the organizational processes it stresses.

First, quality is defined by the organizations' "customer." It is a judgement made by an end user regarding whether a product or service is fit for use. Quality, then, is perceptual; it is a sense of appreciation that something is better than an alternative. It is not merely an "absence of defects," since a product or service can be technically perfect yet unwanted. In a total quality system, performance is judged using the "customer's yardstick" (Clemmer, 1992, p. 26). A school district's customers include students, parents, staff, business, community members, and state politicians, to name a few; in short, they include all of the stakeholders whose needs and expectations impact district activity. From a quality perspective, concern for the needs and expectations of the organization's clientele should be a primary focus. More importantly, the organization needs to identify shared values and define a common purpose that unites these needs and expectations.

Second, quality requires that the "voice of the customer" be translated into goals and objectives that guide action. These goals and objectives encompass what the district should be doing, i.e., they delineate the critical programs and services that fulfill the organization's mission in terms of customer needs. Furthermore, quality changes over time; what customers desire and determine to be "fit for use" today will differ from what they desire tomorrow. A feature of total quality systems is that they attempt to anticipate customer requirements (Dobyns and Crawford-Mason, 1991). For school systems, this

implies needing to be sensitive to the higher education and workforce needs of students now and into the future.

Third, to operationalize these demands on the organization, quality systems are data-driven. Quality involves monitoring and measuring performance of the organization against its mission and customer needs. This provides a means to determine whether or not the organization is doing a good job. This diagnosis of the organization's effectiveness is constant, and meaningful data are used for modification of practices and services on an ongoing basis. This is associated with the use of empirical data to identify sources of problems and evaluate the effectiveness of programs. Moreover, information about performance is shared widely in order to focus organizational efforts toward improvement.

Fourth, as implied already, total quality stresses that the improvement process is continual. It is not a program that is added on to whatever a district is doing; it is a restructuring of the enterprise. Crosby taught that most organizations are "problem organizations" in that management attacks problems as they come up and seeks random improvements (Hunt, 1992). In many organizations, people have become accustomed to the "fad du jour" approach to improvement, and employees are appropriately skeptical of new programs or processes that are launched with great fanfare (Schmidt and Finnigan, 1992). In contrast, quality is not a quick fix; it is a never-ending pursuit. The pursuit of quality is consistent throughout the organization, and everyone is responsible for daily efforts to improve his or her function. The Japanese use the term "kaizen" to refer to the pursuit of continual improvement. Kaizen is a way of thinking, of developing mechanisms to involve people at all levels of the hierarchy in improving the quality of the firm's products and services. "The message of the KAIZEN strategy is that not one day should go by without some kind of improvement being made somewhere in the company" (Imai, 1986, pp. 4-5).

Fifth, quality involves attention to the entire system, rather than segments of an operation. Quality does not come from an individual department or function; you cannot serve the customer from only one point in the organization. Quality is everyone's business. Quality aligns all systems to achieve common

organizational goals and objectives. Cooperation is evident across and throughout the system with coherent strategies for operations in place. Every employee is both a supplier and a customer in a quality system, and every person is responsible and accountable for improvements in his/her role in satisfying the customer. In a school system, then, everyone from the superintendent to school-based support staff is both a supplier and a customer, and continuous improvement is pursued at all levels. Operationally, continual improvement involves expanded interaction among employees with an emphasis on teamwork and empowerment. The interconnectedness of stakeholders in the enterprise is stressed.

From a quality perspective, people are the key to excellence. It is the system's responsibility to be concerned with everyone's ability to contribute to the deliver of quality educational services to customers. Deming, in particular, stressed that quality cannot be delegated by management (Bonstingl, 1992). Deming believed that over 90% of most problems and possibilities for improvement belong to the system, not to individual employees, and management is responsible for the system (Clemmer, 1993). Individual workers cannot create the conditions needed to implement quality, nor can they adopt quality as an organization's philosophy. Organizations must make certain that employees have the *resources* needed to pursue quality (that is, to meet internal and external customer expectations). Necessary resources include such things as the time to engage in problem-solving activities, access to data, access to internal content area experts, and the availability of necessary training and development activities. Quality accentuates the need for educated, skilled, and versatile employees who are willing and capable of learning. Training and an emphasis on continual, lifelong learning, is an integral part of systems restructured to emphasize quality.

Organizationally, quality systems balance the need for flexibility with an appropriate degree of coordination and consistency. The key here is that consistency is not sought by telling each member what to do, but by clearly defining the standards and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. "Flexibility" involves allowing organizational members to apply their professional experience and knowledge to determine how to achieve organizational objectives. A primary function of leadership is to ensure this

balance is reflected in the organization's long-range strategic plan and short-term action plans.

Finally, strong and consistent leadership is required to make quality work. One sign of top management support is their personal involvement. All of the quality gurus stress the need for top management support and participation in the total quality effort (Dobyns and Crawford-Mason, 1991). Since individual employees cannot create the conditions and supply the resources needed to implement quality processes, leaders are responsible for empowering workers to solve problems and seek improvements, and for adopting policies and practices that are congruent with and supportive of the quality principles.

Another sign of management support is the willingness to take a hard look at the organization's policies and procedures. As an example, many of the features of total quality systems highlighted above are associated with alternatives to traditional hierarchical structures, for instance, team structures like quality circles, which examine performance-related data and generate suggestions to solve problems within a function. Decision making in total quality systems tends to be more decentralized so that workers and managers can jointly discuss and solve problems that affect their capacity to satisfy their customers. Total quality also means adopting potentially different management practices: Leading is helping, coaching, and supporting, not controlling, ranking, or punishing. In a quality system, blame is not as important as solving problems. This requires a good measure of trust.

The quality audit uses the features of total quality management as a framework for analyzing the efficacy of school district administrative structures and processes. The audit process supports and facilitates change in three ways: it helps districts identify specific areas for improvement; it provides an opportunity for collaborative dialogue among stakeholders; and it serves a symbolic function as an indicator of the districts' willingness to change. Important information is revealed on how to improve various aspects of the organizational system, and organizational insiders develop the capacity to conduct self-examinations of their school system administration in the future.

Methodology

The quality review is designed as a participatory action research process, adapting Schein's (1992) clinical research model to the present purposes. Schein's clinical research model is founded on the idea that organizational members will reveal themselves in a forum guided by a consultant / clinician who is invited into the organization to assist in solving an important organizational problem. The consultant / clinician is psychologically licensed to structure the dialogue and ask questions to uncover important data needed in problem solving and decision making.

Operationally, a small team of researchers works with a district steering committee to both structure the audit and provide ongoing feedback en route to preparing a final report. In-house staff have expert knowledge about district operations, structure, and culture; researchers working alone could not hope to amass this depth of knowledge in a reasonable time frame. The steering committee assists in devising the final data collection strategy and reviewing the findings to develop recommendations concerning actions the district may take to improve.

The three basic questions asked in a quality review are:

- How well is the current administrative system supporting services provided by the district?
- What structures and processes are necessary to ensure the effective administration of district operations?
- What changes are needed to enable the district to meet the challenges of the future?

The research design is based on the belief that the best way to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of any districts' current administrative system is to examine specific positions in the district. Talking to incumbents about their experiences on the job and soliciting the opportunities they see for improvement provides the qualitative data to develop sound recommendations, while building staff commitment to and ownership of any proposed changes.

The specific design of a quality review depends in part on the district, its strategic directions, and

existing levels of trust and commitment to the change process. The review generally includes:

- *Central Office Interviews*. Individual interviews are typically conducted with all central office administrators, either individually or in small groups, and focus groups of central office support staff members.
- *School Interviews*. In a sample of schools, interviews are conducted with the principal, assistant principal(s) (if applicable), and representative groups of teachers and school based support staff.
- *Board Discussion*. In some cases, individual board members are interviewed to include their perceptions of the efficacy of the administrative system. More typically, an informal meeting is held in which participating board members are asked some general questions about their expectations for the review and their impressions of the district's administrative structure and progress.
- *School Climate Surveys*. School interviews provide "thick descriptions" of individual's thoughts and feelings about the support they receive from central administration and the opportunities that exist for improvement. School climate surveys augment these data by providing a "snapshot" of how all staff perceive their work environment, their jobs, and various aspects of administrative services. Teachers and support staff generally complete school climate surveys, although there are parallel instruments for administrators, students, and parents/community members. [Climate surveys are based on the *Conditions and Resources of Teaching Survey*; see Bacharach, Bauer and Shedd, 1986, for a description.]
- *Review of Secondary Documents*. In all cases, the research team reviews secondary documents related to district administration, including the district's strategic plan, job descriptions, policy manuals, etc.

Interview write-ups are prepared, read, and discussed by the review team. Discussion is focused on the identification of common themes and issues. (No issue is raised unless it is considered thematic, by

which we mean that at least three to five people or groups commented on it in their interview. Issues raised in the interviews are cross-referenced with the survey data to determine the degree of consistency and generalizability.) The analysis then considers how the themes and issues play out across the various roles in the district.

Quantitative survey data are analyzed by school or job site, job group, and assignments (full time, part time, temporary). Additionally, respondents are invited to add any comments they have at the end of the surveys, and written comments are read, categorized, and analyzed. An appendix to this paper includes the sample interview format and school climate surveys used in the case presented.

The quality audit differs substantially in focus from traditional human resource audits, which may examine specific functions and/or workloads. Specifically, the quality audit is not a job analysis. Instead, the quality audit takes a more systemic approach; while specific barriers to performance or customer service issues related to specific areas might be identified, the overall focus is on the delineation of themes across functions.

Data Sources

Over the past seven years, the quality audit has been used in a dozen school systems. Because the focus of this paper is to describe the audit as a methodology for conducting an assessment of a district's capacity for change and development, data from one district (which we will call Suburban) will be used to illustrate the process. Suburban is a small district (six schools covering grades pre-k through eight) in the Northeast that was among the first to use the audit in 1989-1990. At that time, the district had not begun the strategic planning process; in fact, the audit was instrumental in initiating strategic planning. However, the audit data were used in subsequent planning efforts, and the district repeated the audit process during the 1995-1996 school year to develop fresh data concerning their progress in meeting their strategic change goals.

A difficulty in describing a methodology like the quality audit is that it is highly contextualized. The design of the methodology, the data elements, investigative procedures, follow-up steps, and

reporting requirements vary depending on the district organization, its goals, and its readiness for the dialogue. It is difficult, then, to generalize about the process or its content; something is bound to be lost in the translation. Given these caveats, though, in the following sections we will describe the topics included in the audit and some of the themes revealed through this process in the first audit conducted in Suburban. Next, to provide some sense of how the district used these data, we will briefly highlight some of the results of the second audit.

It bears repeating that we do not mean to infer that this case is "typical;" indeed, the degree to which findings depend on such things as district and school culture, history, and context is a story unto itself, and one of the reasons we feel it important for districts to engage in this type of study. There is only so much that can be generalized from the literature and experiences of other sites; organizational change requires that the local district mold the change process to their unique needs, capacities, and goals.

Quality Audit Content

As already mentioned, the design and structure of the audit itself varies across cases depending on the needs of the district and its readiness for change. In this section, we will briefly review the audit content areas, providing illustrations of the types of issues that emerged as thematic in Suburban's first audit, and where appropriate, the recommendations the review team discussed with the leadership team.

Context

The review team considers all data in their present context. That is, in analyzing the data, the recent history of the district and various aspects of its culture and political climate are factored into the discussion and recommendations. Thus, the first job of the review team is to act as ethnographers and construct a summary of the "taken for granted" aspects of district culture as well as a summary of significant happenings in the recent past. The rationale for this stage is that there are no "absolute truths" in terms of assessing a district's capacity for change or the means the district might use to pursue its strategic objectives. Instead of using the model as a template or assuming there is "one best way" to

organize, all findings and comments take into account aspects of the present context that affect administrative capacity, actions, and performance. To illustrate, in Suburban there were several contextual issues that needed to be considered:

- The district was experiencing a period of rapid growth, which made extreme demands on the school system. The availability of appropriate space impacted on such issues as class size, scheduling, and the ability to conduct various programs and activities. The district was also in the midst of a building program.
- Suburban enjoyed strong support from its communities, although many commented that the district serves a more diverse and complex student body than ever before. Increasing diversity in the community, and the need to cultivate the support of traditionally disenfranchised groups, represented a growing need. Most also suggested that the community tended to expect a lot from the schools, and that parents in particular were intolerant of failure. Parents were generally characterized as supportive, though, and many demonstrated this by volunteering in the schools.
- Suburban experienced a great deal of administrative change just prior to the first audit. Specifically, the district had a new superintendent, and more than two-thirds of the administrators in the district were either new or in new jobs. There was a sense of confusion and anticipation -- confusion about roles, and anticipation regarding the degree of change and style of the new leadership.
- Suburban had a history of providing schools with a great deal of autonomy, so much so that many characterized the schools as "islands unto themselves." Further, virtually everyone commented about the high quality of the staff. However, people also talked about the staff as being taken-for-granted, and teachers in particular were regarded as an "untapped potential." Some of these feelings lingered from a recently completed contract negotiation with the teachers' association.

In addition to these specific contextual issues, an important contextual issue is the district's experience with change. An audit done as a part of a strategic planning process must include a consideration of issues relating to change management, basic processes that provide a foundation for change into the future. Failure to address these issues will constrain the implementation of a strategic plan. Furthermore, total quality emphasizes continuous improvement, and thus change may be considered a constant rather than an episodic event. This makes consideration of the district's experience with change processes especially important.

In examining the likely success of change processes, it is important to distinguish between what management theorists call *change management* and *transition management* (Beckhard and Harris, 1977):

- *Change management* is what most organizations and managers focus on: It requires understanding the destination and designing a plan to get there. The change plan involves concrete elements, and includes specific actions and time lines for completing activities.
- *Transition management* deals with the impact of change on people. It focuses on the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Transition management requires nurturing new understandings, new values, new attitudes, and new identities. Involvement in the change process is a key part of transition management; sensitivity to what people feel, and listening to what they have to say, are critical skills associated with transition management.

Both change and transition must be accounted for if the types of programs embodied in a typical strategic plan are to be successfully implemented and institutionalized. The former includes consideration of formal planning systems and implementation processes, and the latter with the ability of district stakeholders to understand, embrace, and participate in change. Change management requires that district leaders build a sense of urgency or create a felt need for change; create a "clear tomorrow" embodied in a vision for the future; develop a migration path or a plan for implementing change; and reinforce the new behaviors associated with change. In short, then, managing change requires

consideration of both restructuring and reculturing (see, for instance, Elmore, 1995).

In Suburban in 1989-90, people characterized the district as "coasting," and many questioned whether the district was actively "pursuing excellence." The district was characterized as reactive rather than proactive. There was no unifying vision or mission; as mentioned, schools were considered "islands unto themselves." Instructional staff reported that the district was "falling behind" in terms of attention to program development and instructional methods. Staff development was haphazard and episodic. In short, change was something that *happened to* the district, often prompted by state action. Little change was initiated locally.

Consensus within and across levels

The literature on effective schools and organizations stresses the importance of achieving consensus regarding the mission and strategic goals of the organization and the development of operational plans to describe how the organization is going to realize its mission. Achieving consensus concerning where the district is going and how it plans to get there, establishing parameters for implementing these plans, and monitoring progress relative to the plans are critical functions of leadership. Coordinating, facilitating, and continual improvement of these plans are critical aspects of management. Both leadership and management are essential elements of a quality educational program.

An examination of the degree of consensus regarding district mission and priorities, as well as the degree of coordination and evaluation of programs within and across levels of the school system, is the next element of the quality review. In an effective district, the board will establish and communicate clear goals and objectives for the district in collaboration with district administration. Specific measures or indicators of program effectiveness will be established, as well, and used to evaluate progress toward meeting district goals and objectives. The district office directs and coordinates the operationalization of these goals and objectives, facilitating and supporting the efforts of school staff in implementing effective programs. In the absence of clear priorities, operational plans, and performance measures, coordinated action across schools and levels of the district may be problematic and members of the

school community often end up working at cross-purposes.

District mission and planning

In the audit, three different levels of planning are considered: strategic planning, operational planning, and school-based planning. Ideally, the three levels should represent an integrated system. In this section, we examine the strategic and operational planning processes. We are concerned with whether members of a school community are aware of the district's planning efforts (past or present), and whether there are contradictions in the district's behaviors and policies in contrast to the spirit of adopted long-range plans. Issues of congruence present powerful messages about what's "really important," and thus they are important indicators of the likelihood that a strategic plan will work. Communication of plans is important to bring people on board and help them "leave home," using the change management terminology (see, for instance, Bridges, 1991). Especially when a plan is fairly new, many are willing to assume a "wait and see" attitude and give their district a chance to adjust policies and practices to be more consistent with a strategic plan; the audit helps determine if this is an issue.

In looking at operational planning, we investigate the degree of participation in the implementation of strategic action plans, the degree to which people are aware of what action teams or committees might be doing, and potential coordination issues between and among existing teams or committees. The pace and priority structure, who's responsible for what, and how decentralized / centralized decision making is regarding various plans may all be sources of frustration. There is often a "looseness" in the action planning process that must be addressed if the types of changes embodied in a typical strategic plan are to be successful. Finally, we assess the degree to which the district is following through with evaluation of its action plans. Quite often, because of time, energy, and other resource issues, evaluation is given short shrift. Does the district consistently use data in making program decisions? Many planning processes suggest that cost-benefit analyses be presented for each action, which is consistent with the use of data, but is there follow through with this requirement? Is there an information processing infrastructure in place to collect and disseminate outcome-related data to

administrators, schools and units? Ongoing support for change efforts requires the consistent use of data in the full action planning cycle, including establishing initial plans, implementation, and evaluation. Associated with this is the need to determine how current programs are helping students meet defined outcome standards. Quite often, districts have an "add on" mentality; programs are added without deleting those that no longer meet student needs or serve current strategic objectives. The result is a feeling of burnout. In some districts, the curriculum has become so overloaded that "organized abandonment" committees are formed to determine what programs might be dropped. Instead, schools and units need to evaluate current practices and programs on an ongoing basis to determine their contribution to the attainment of student outcomes.

In Suburban, the 1989-1990 review showed that most people did not feel that there was a common sense of district mission. There was also a sentiment that the district was unwilling to drop programs, that there was an "add-on" mentality and that the district historically attempted to meet everyone's needs. Almost 90% of the teachers surveyed felt that there was not enough time in the day to do what was expected of them, and about half of all support staff felt this way. The absence of a mission or strategic goals resulted in a concurrent absence of decision criteria with which to judge whether programs were meeting the needs of students. There was no barometer to judge whether programs were working, and there was no formal, systematic program evaluation process in place.

Consensus and coordination across levels

In this section, we examine the degree of consensus across levels in the district, focusing on the contribution each administrative level makes to support the teaching and learning process. First, the board is the elected representative of the community. Through their actions, particularly by setting district policy, they provide the normative foundation for district services. In Suburban, there was some antipathy among teachers regarding the board; only 54% of the teachers surveyed felt that the school board and administrators work well together as a team. Most agreed this was a result of the prolonged impasse and recently completed contract negotiations. Administrators praised the board's

professionalism and their willingness to "let us run the district."

Second, the district office is the administrative arm of the school system. The district administration serves as the primary link between the board and the schools. Its role is to translate board policy into concrete actions, to coordinate activities across schools, and to plan, direct, and support the implementation and evaluation of district programs and activities. At the time of the first study, the Suburban district office was undergoing significant change. People characterized the previous administration as having an "operational focus," and people characterized the general tone of administration as controlling (some said "intimidating"). Power was exercised one-on-one, rather than through a chain of command, and there was not a lot of change activity in the district. People were not "unhappy" with the previous administration, but expressed some frustration at the lack of attention to improving instructional programs and the general feelings of inertia. Many said they felt taken for granted or "left out;" about half of the teachers surveyed said that communication was an area that needed attention.

There was anticipation about the new administration, and a "show me" attitude as well among staff. There was a strong desire for some consistency and openness, for more information flowing out to the schools and open communication of information. Clearly, there was little sense of an administrative team at the time; everyone was too new, and there was some reluctance on the part of some to voice their opinions openly until it was clear that this was acceptable.

Finally, the analysis moves to the school level administration and its support for teaching and learning. As mentioned earlier, the schools in Suburban historically enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, but very little communication flowed between the schools. About two-thirds of the teachers surveyed felt that teachers who taught on the same grade level had no opportunity to meet and discuss curriculum, and half felt that curriculum is not well coordinated among schools and that curriculum goals were not clear. While schools enjoyed autonomy, though, specific central office functions exercised a tight control over the schools rather than acting as facilitators of school-based action.

Principals were generally characterized positively, and both interviews and survey data support the idea that staff saw principals as generally supportive. The exception to these positive findings was the Middle School. Recall that Suburban is a regional school district with schools covering grades pre-K through eight; the Middle School is the sole secondary building. It was characterized as highly departmentalized, even though the district had implemented interdisciplinary teams, and staff felt overwhelmingly that there was a "missing layer of administration," namely department chairs. Interviews revealed that this suggestion reflected the feeling of a general lack of support from building administration, and a sense that staff was left out of decision making. Many felt the previous administration treated them as children, and resource issues existed, especially in relation to access to copying machines and telephones.

Scheduling was an issue in the building -- for administrators because of the rapid growth in student population and the increasingly difficult time they had developing the master schedule, and for teachers who had to deal with the "wrong type of space" for their classes or the experience of not having their own classrooms. Over 60% of the teachers surveyed felt classes were too large, and about the same percentage felt the district needed to address space issues. Half of the teachers in the Middle School also felt that students were pulled out of classes too often, and that their classes were too frequently interrupted.

Recommendations

The effective delivery of a quality educational program requires consensus concerning mission, goals, and priorities across levels of the organization. Suburban was undergoing a significant period of growth and change associated with the new administration. The district had already begun the process of expanding facilities; issues relating to space were being addressed. Issues relating more directly to the sense that the district was "coasting" were not.

First, it was recommended that the new administration articulate a district mission and institutionalize a strategic planning process. A strategic planning process provides decision criteria that

can unify a district. That is, when a strategic plan or strategic objectives are actively integrated into operations, they can be used as decision criteria and used to weigh the degree to which various activities support the attainment of strategic goals. The plan would address the overall lack of a sense of "district" in Suburban, and permit the district to begin to address issues of overload through the implementation of a program evaluation system tied to strategic outcomes.

It was also recommended that the district enhance district-wide communication mechanisms, both to facilitate promoting a sense of district mission and to promote trust and teamwork. In the context of the administrative changes, there was reluctance among administrators to voice their opinions, and likewise staff had a "wait and see" attitude. Anything that would promote a sense of openness and team could provide a powerful signal of change in district culture. Likewise, anything that could promote communication among buildings would have a spillover effect that would help address the lack of coordination and sense of isolation. To that end, a district newsletter was recommended as a first step, and it was also suggested that the district consider rehiring a part-time Public Relations officer, a position that had existed in the past in the district.

District Operations: Improving Performance

The quality audit is focused directly on the future; generally speaking, the review team is charged with recommending actions that will help a district realize its vision or formulate its strategic plan for reaching a desired future. However, it is also a product of the district's culture, history, and perceptions about the present. Any change process involves moving from the present situation some desired future state; we need to be as concerned here with the foundation for change that the present structure provides as we are with a restructuring of the district. In this section, we discuss findings related to improving the performance of various central administrative functions. This provides not only specific recommendations for growth today, but also a foundation for the discussion of any recommended restructuring of central office functions.

The district office is the administrative arm of the school system, and as such, serves as the

primary link between the Board and the schools. Its role is to translate policy into concrete action; to coordinate activities between schools; and to plan, monitor, and support the implementation and evaluation of district programs. The questions raised here deal with the efficacy of central administrative functions in terms of their strategic, supervisory, support, and coordinating roles. It bears repeating that we look for themes; naturally, for most areas someone has a "horror story" to provide regarding an experience with each administrative function, but in the audit we are concerned with issues that can be traced to structural or systemic causes. Thus, we look for the issues or bottlenecks that are reported by many and reinforced in the survey data.

It is also important to emphasize that in the quality audit, we are not concerned with specific job-holders, or even with particular positions in the sense that this is not a job analysis. We inquire about functions like budgeting and accounting, not about specific people in the business office, about curriculum planning and revision, not about a specific initiative or subject area. Typically, in most districts, the majority of respondents in individual and focus group interviews personalize their responses. The researcher's job is to look behind these characterizations of individuals to potential organizational causes of performance issues. Consistent with a quality perspective, we assume that poor performance tends to be traceable to systemic causes rather than a personal lack of motivation or skills. Even if these are present, the question is whether the organization has an opportunity and responsibility for dealing with them. Often, barriers to effective performance constrain both the contribution which can be made by an employee and the coordination of activities between employees.

In considering barriers to performance, particular attention is given to the district office and the relation of district office functions to school level activities. Consistent with a quality focus, the district office functions are examined in relation to their support and facilitation of school and classroom activities. The review attempts to determine how well district office functions serve the schools, and, where service was perceived as an issue, to identify the possible reasons for this assessment and develop recommendations to deal with these.

The specific areas discussed in this section depend on the organizational structure of the district being studied and its strategic goals. In 1989-90, Suburban was organized as follows:

- "Special Services" included special education, child study team operations, guidance, basic skills and ESL
- "Finance" included all budgeting activities and purchasing
- "Non-Instructional Services" included maintenance, custodial services, transportation, and food service

Rather than discussing each function in detail, we will highlight some of the key findings from the initial audit to provide an example of the kinds of issues and recommendations that emerge through the audit process.

Curriculum and instruction

Until the 1989-90 school year, there was no "curriculum and instruction" office housed in the central office, one indicator of the extent to which the district was "operationally" rather than "instructionally" focused. At the time of the study, at the urging of the new superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction position was created, and the office was being organized. There was concern that the curriculum development process would be "dictated" rather than facilitated, reflecting the prevailing culture of the previous administration. In particular, though, there was concern that curriculum development work would be another "add on," and that the district would not support the involvement of principals and teachers by providing the time needed to do this work and/or summer stipends to support it.

Special Services

Special services handled all special education, child study teams, health services, speech therapy, federal grants for special education, guidance, basic skills instruction, the ESL program, home instruction, and non-public schools. In 1989-1990, most agreed that the district had one of the finest special education programs in the state. People felt supportive of the program, even proud, although

many questioned whether the district could afford the kind of program it had. Some were unsure about the future scope of the program under the new administration; given the fact that the district was just starting strategic planning, it is not surprising that the question of how special services "fit" was being raised. Overall, school staff felt well informed regarding special education services. As in many districts, some felt that staff referred students too readily, students who were not truly in need of special attention, and that staff did not thoroughly understand the classification system.

Most of all, some felt that special education was "dangling," that it was generally left out of considerations of the district's future plans. Special education teachers were sometimes left out of the communications loop in the schools. There was agreement that classroom teachers needed more assistance in terms of training on how to deal with mainstreamed children, and there was a desire for considerably more staff development in this area. Finally, the placement of guidance, basic skills instruction, and ESP programs in this function was questioned; many felt that these programs belonged in the newly formed curriculum and instruction function.

Finance

Many of the operational issues identified as problematic in 1989-1990 were located in the Finance and Non-Instructional Services functions. First, the budget process was perceived to be inconsistent from school to school, perhaps owing to the historical independence among buildings. In fact, some called the entire process "abysmal." Few understood the process, building administrators reported having difficulty getting timely information to complete their budget responsibilities, and likewise, teachers felt unable to get information needed to plan. A quarter of all teachers surveyed, and a third in the Middle School, reported that they frequently had job-related problems relating to the budget process.

The purchasing process was especially problematic, and issues related to this fueled bad feelings and a sense of low morale in the district. School administrators and teachers cited the fact that inferior quality teaching materials were purchased in order to save money, the purchasing process itself was called inflexible, and orders were often delayed or canceled outright without notification to the schools.

There was no apparent organized review of products to be purchased, nor were there product specifications set, and there was a "no back order" policy that resulted in vendors discarding purchase orders. It was not uncommon to receive instructional materials late (e.g., by November in the fall semester), and it was not uncommon for principals to report that they had their secretaries follow-up on purchase orders because they could not rely on the finance office to do this. Individual schools ordered routinely used supplies like paper and chalk themselves; there was not central storehouse or coordination of orders between schools. Teachers reported that they were required to perform clerical functions associated with purchasing, as well, which fueled a perception that the district only gave lip service to treating them as professionals.

Non-Instructional Services

In 1989-1990, Non-Instructional Services included maintenance, custodial services, transportation and food service. Transportation and food service were generally rated positively, but maintenance and custodial services were rated quite poorly. In terms of maintenance, although it was generally acknowledged that facilities were well cared for, the function was described as "too independent" and "a fiefdom." Major projects were handled effectively, although they tended to be scheduled during the school year, resulting in excessive noise and disruption of classroom programs. Stories about "the bulldozers rolling in after the buses" and about screaming to be heard over the sound of jackhammers and construction equipment were not uncommon. Routine maintenance and smaller, day-to-day maintenance did not get done in a timely fashion; school staff reported having to wait months (some said years) to get work done, and many teachers reported fixing problems themselves. Fully half of the teachers surveyed said that they almost always or frequently experienced job-related problems with custodial and maintenance. Over 30% said that their classroom was poorly ventilated, dirty, or in disrepair. Teachers reported having to wait for months, even years, to get a work order processed. There was no clear process for prioritizing work orders, or at least the process was not clear to staff.

Custodial services were contracted out in 1989-1990, and services were considered to be

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"improving." There was confusion regarding who supervised custodians, and as noted above, staff surveys showed that many teachers felt negatively about custodial and maintenance services. Fully 40% were dissatisfied with the extent to which conditions allowed them to perform their jobs, which was certainly not exclusively related to custodial and maintenance, but nonetheless pointed up teachers' experiences at the time. About 30% said that their classrooms were dirty, poorly ventilated, or otherwise unusable.

Recommendations

A consistent theme throughout the audit is the extent to which central office and school administrative functions need to be delivered with a focus on customer service. Many of the issues reflected in this section relate to a lack of appreciation for the fact that the schools are the "clients" of central office administrative services, and that students and school level staff are clients of school administration services. The findings in Suburban reflect breakdowns in the delivery of quality support services that over time produced anxiety, antipathy, and generally low morale. The following actions were recommended:

- The entire budget and finance process needed to be revisited, "tightened up," and communicated clearly to staff, and computerization of the function needed to be investigated.
- The purchasing process needed to be revamped; some aspects of the process deserved to be centralized, especially with respect to supplies and materials that all schools use. Uniform specifications for supplies and materials needed to be developed, and a vendor list needed to be compiled and distributed by the central office. The "no back order" policy needed to be dropped.
- The decision to have a small, highly skilled maintenance crew needed to be revisited in light of the newly developed strategic plan. New staffing options needed to be investigated; routine maintenance operations were not being completed, and these tended to become

nuisance issues in classrooms or escalate to more serious maintenance concerns. Hiring additional staff, reassigning existing staff to balance out these functions, or assigning some tasks to custodians could be considered. A computerized work order system needed to be institutionalized, with clear priorities for completion of work orders.

- The role of special services in the district needed to be revisited and clarified in light of the new mission and strategic objectives. The level of interaction between special service staff and classroom teachers needed to be examined, with an eye toward providing teachers with more assistance in learning how to deal with special populations. The role of guidance, basic skills, and ESL needed to be revisited in light of the new objectives, and these probably needed to be moved under the new curriculum and instruction office.

Human Resource Development

Ensuring the effective performance of staff and the development of the organization's human resources are critical to the successful operation of the school system and the delivery of quality educational services. This final content area covers some of the key organizational processes that support human resource development: supervision, evaluation, staff development, teamwork, and work climate.

Supervision

Research on effective supervision focuses on the daily routines which help determine the nature of the work environment, for example, how often administrators recognize staff for doing a good job and the degree of day-to-day contact between administrators and staff. In a district that promotes human resource excellence, supervision is a key to employee growth and development. That is, an effective administrator sees employee growth and development as a primary responsibility of his/her role. An issue associated with supervision and evaluation is administrative (over)load. As districts like Suburban grow in size and complexity, and as change becomes more of a norm, the number of tasks expected of principals and the number of times they are required to be out of their building jeopardizes their capacity to be effective. To be sure, an effective organization has leaders at all levels, and all staff play some

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leadership roles, but in many cases principals are stretched.

Survey data in Suburban revealed that the sheer amount of contact between administrators and teachers was an issue: nearly 40% of staff rated the amount of contact as inadequate, and nearly 70% said that their supervisors observed them working *monthly or less often*. This was also a problem for support staff, especially instructional aides. A significant percentage of teachers rated the nature of contact negatively, as well, although most felt principals were supportive. There was considerable confusion in the wake of the administrative changes in the district; about a third of all teachers surveyed felt that there were not clear communication channels in the district. There was confusion, as well, about the relationship between schools, principals, and new administrative offices, notably the curriculum office.

Performance Evaluation

Evaluation processes involve a dialogue between supervisor and subordinate, (or more appropriately phrased between professionals), and include both formative and summative elements. Individual growth plans form a basis of assessment. In terms of performance evaluation, we investigate whether the process occurs for all staff (including administrators and support staff), whether the evaluation process is seen as "pro forma," and whether the processes have been updated consistently to reflect changes in jobs and programs. In short, is evaluation a process that assists in human resource growth and development, or is it merely a paper process necessitated by regulation or norms?

The data suggested that teachers did not feel that evaluation helped them grow professionally in Suburban; over half said that supervisors seldom clarified expectations about their work, and nearly 60% said that supervisors seldom or occasionally provided helpful feedback. In general, personal improvement plans were characterized as rudimentary or "safe," and most said that staff evaluation did not support any specific instructional strategy. Finally, there were some questions about the consistency with which evaluation processes were implemented, especially among support staff: 35% felt that evaluation is not implemented in the same manner for all staff.

Staff Development

Virtually everyone attests to the centrality of staff development and its importance to change; researchers writing on restructuring and reculturing stress the role of training and development in helping individuals develop new belief-states and personal capacities to engage in new activities (Elmore, 1995). In the audit, we look at both the level of support for staff development, and also its vision - what guides decisions regarding staff development, and how connected is it to the district's strategic directions? We believe that districts need to identify the skills required for success under their programs; identify the gaps between the necessary skills and staffs' existing skills; and establish development programs or processes designed to provide all staff with the required skills for success.

In 1989-1990, interviews and survey data supported the notion that staff development was in need of improvement in Suburban. First, most agreed that there was not enough staff development, and many said that staff development was disorganized or haphazard, not sufficiently tied to the curriculum or the implementation of new programs. It was noted that staff development had to be better coordinated with special services; many classroom teachers felt that they needed more support in terms of learning ways to deal with mainstreamed children. There were some apparent issues with staff development opportunities for support staff, as well, and in terms of administration, it was unclear who's responsibility staff development was.

Participation in Decision Making and Teamwork

The success of a district depends on the contribution and commitment of all staff. This is not to imply that agreement is necessary at all times; disagreements can be quite healthy. However, if a district is going to mobilize for change, it is necessary to establish and sustain an environment which fosters trust and ensures that all members support the mission and goals. The literature on effective organizations and effective schools suggests that participation in decision making not only makes the best use of staff expertise, it is a key element in the development of a sense of teamwork and positive staff morale (Bauer, 1996). Participation is expected to yield more alternative solutions to the issues

confronting the district, greater commitment to decisions, and more effective implementation of action plans.

In 1989-1990, we found that there were some communications issues in the district. While many felt better informed than under the previous administration, assistant principals, special services coordinators, and special area (art, music, physical education) teachers felt somewhat "out of the loop," and as noted earlier, many administrators felt apprehensive about voicing their opinions. About 40% of the teachers felt that they did not have adequate opportunity to voice their opinions on district matters, and a majority of teachers and support staff felt that they did not have regular meetings at their grade level or in their work unit that helped them do their jobs. Surveys showed that 64% of the teachers believed that they should have more of a say in decisions, and the same percentage felt that decision makers did not take their input seriously when they did have an opportunity to voice it.

Work Climate

The term "work climate" is used here as an umbrella for issues related to morale, including equity, recognition, and classroom environment. These issues were all significant at the time. Equity came up in a variety of ways, notably in terms of perceived favoritism in the delivery of central office services. Issues related to professionalism came up in a variety of ways already cited, for instance, in terms of the quality and timeliness of supplies, in terms of scheduling, and in terms of the lack of adequate information to complete pre-budgeting. This also came up in relation to teachers' lack of access to telephones, copy machines, and clerical assistance.

In general, there was a perceived incongruity between the rhetoric and reality of treatment: While people said that the staff was "high quality," teachers did not feel that they were treated with the respect due true professionals. Associated with this was the perception that recognition was hard to come by; although teachers were expected to give 150%, they were not given the proverbial pats on the back in return.

The main issues related to classroom environment in 1989-1990 had to do with class size, pull-

outs and classroom interruptions. Over 60% of the teachers felt that classes were too large, which of course was related to space issues; 47% felt that there was inadequate group instruction space and 64% not enough storage space. Over 40% felt that students were pulled out of classes too often, and about half said that classes were interrupted too frequently.

Recommendations

A quality focus accentuates the importance of seeing people as the organization's most valuable resource. From a quality perspective, people are the key to excellence. It is the system's responsibility to be concerned with everyone's ability to contribute to the organization's strategic goals and objectives. From this perspective, Suburban needed to address several issues:

- Building level administrators needed to make a concerted effort to be more visible in the buildings and increase their level of interaction with staff. This would have an impact on communications, a sense of teamwork, and supervision issues.
- The district needed to revise and monitor the implementation of its performance evaluation systems. Evaluation was not perceived to be tied to instruction for teachers, nor did staff feel that evaluation promoted professional growth.
- The district needed to take a holistic look at staff development and the types of training and educational opportunities available to all staff. Programs needed to be developed to support the success of strategic goals as they emerged.
- The district needed to find mechanisms to promote involvement in decision making. This could include the development of shared decision making structures.

Equity issues relating to the treatment of support staff and special area teachers would likely be addressed through some of the other recommendations cited above, but it was also felt that these issues needed the involvement and attention of administrators at all levels.

Suburban 1995-96

While the focus of this paper is on the quality audit as a methodology, but to illustrate the utility of

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the process, we will spend some time briefly highlighting some of the findings from the more recent audit in Suburban this provides some insight into what the audit process can do for a district that is willing to participate and that is ready to use these types of data to guide strategic change activity. We will conclude with a discussion of the challenges that emerged as significant for the district today.

Consensus within and across levels

In a real sense, the district has undergone a transformation -- that is, in the vernacular used by management theorists, the district has fundamentally changed in a permanent fashion, today embodying what many management theorists would call a "learning organization" (Senge, 1990). First, the district has twice gone through the process of developing strategic goals, which have been used at all levels to guide decision making and program development. The district is no longer characterized as "coasting" or "reactive;" people seem to embrace change as a part of their jobs. Overall, administrators have embraced a customer service approach to their work; they are concerned with supporting what goes on in the classroom. That is, administrators tended to agree with what one stated: "We ask teachers to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, and our jobs are to do the same for teachers and school staff." Of course this is not universally successful, and there is improvement needed in all functions, but in general interviews revealed that administrators try their best to operationalize this sentiment. In quality terminology, they try to serve their internal customers.

Interviews show that most respondents felt that the administration operates as a team, although there are some lingering communication-related issues (e.g., responding to inquiries in a timely fashion). The superintendent initiated the practice of involving all administrators with leadership training conducted by the Covey Institute, and has instituted the process of having periodic, open discussions of teamwork and leadership issues. Administrators rate this experience positively, and several respondents said, quite simply, that administrators genuinely like each other. The change in administrative culture is recognized at other levels in the district: the teacher survey shows that 90% of the respondents feel central office administrators and principals work well together as a team, and 78% feel administrators are

available when they need to see them. Over 80% feel that there is evidence of instructional planning from the district office, and 62% feel that administrators are aware what goes on in classroom.

Surveys and interviews reveal that there appears to be a high level of teamwork in most buildings. An emphasis on professional development in the district has resulted in an even greater feeling that the organization is supportive. Most teacher groups indicated that they have a great deal of respect for the principals and vice principals, and survey data tend to support the finding that principals are perceived more favorably in terms of supervisory behavior. Survey data also shows that over 90% feel that teachers in their school work as a team, and that nearly 80% believe that teachers and administrators work well as a team.

Perhaps most significantly, the change process itself is *internal* to the district. Most people cited higher trust levels in their work units and in the district as a whole. Teacher surveys reveals higher levels of teamwork, more favorable assessments of supervision, evaluation and staff development, and generally supportive administrative rules and regulations. Growth personally and systemically emerges from a stronger base of trust -- notably in the sentiment that you are encouraged to try new things. Over 95% of the teachers indicate that most teachers in the district try to be innovative, and just under 90% say that honest mistakes are forgiven rather than held against people -- as compared with just 58% feeling this way in 1989-1990.

These changes are reflected in survey numbers associated with satisfaction, as well. As an example, whereas in the previous study, 39% of the respondents were "very satisfied" with the chance their job gives them to do what they are best at, 66% were "very satisfied" in the more recent study. In 1989-1990, only 15% were "very satisfied" with the extent to which conditions allowed them to be effective, while 41% are "very satisfied" today. Similar types of patterns exist with respect to satisfaction with professional development, involvement in decision making, recognition, and community support.

<u>District Operations</u>

There were many changes in specific central office functions between the first and more recent

audit. For example, guidance, basic skills, and ESL were moved from special services to curriculum, thus clarifying roles. A media/technology office was opened to develop and coordinate the implementation of an ambitious technology plan, and the district's public relations officer was rehired. This individual puts out an in-house newsletter and community newsletter, and assists each school with the publication of individual school newsletters.

Two areas deserve emphasis in terms of highlighting the changes in Suburban. First, it can certainly no longer be said that the district "isn't curriculum focused." The enormity of the effort put forth to transform the district's curriculum was, to quote several interviewees, "breathtaking." The district adopted a traditional, five year curriculum development and assessment cycle, and concentrated over the past six years primarily in language arts and mathematics, while the focus is currently shifting to other areas. Several individuals said that the emphasis on process oriented curriculum and instructional delivery is the single, biggest change in the district, and the concurrent emphasis on teacher-developed materials was also cited.

The curriculum process is implemented collaboratively; specialists act in support of school-based activity, providing leadership through staff development, access to research and "best practice" skills, and otherwise providing support to principals, teachers, and other school staff. School administrators play the lead role in supporting instructional delivery and evaluate staff to ensure implementation. Some said that the degree of teacher involvement in curriculum development is testimony to the district's commitment to shared decision making "in the areas that matter most." The district supports summer curriculum development work, and teacher groups indicated that they are very adequately involved in all facets of the curriculum cycle. Survey data support this: nearly 80% say that they are adequately involved in curriculum planning, and over 70% agree that curriculum planning and revision is a smooth, ongoing process. Nearly three out of four teachers agree or agree strongly that faculty members and administrators regularly review progress toward meeting curriculum goals. Almost 90% say that teachers on the same grade level or in the same subject area often discuss curriculum and instruction issues, as

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compared with less than 40% in the earlier study.

Second, business operations were entirely restructuring after the 1989-90 audit. "Non-instructional services" and "finance" were merged under the direction of a district business manager, and the budget process, purchasing, processing of maintenance work orders, and custodial cleaning schedules were examined and revised. Interviews in 1995-96 reveal a function that works; people said things like, "Improved a billion percent," and "Very responsive, excellent support, and good flexibility within the district framework." Teacher surveys show that only 8% of the teachers always or frequently experience job-related problems with budget, down from 23% in the previous study, while 16% experience problems with purchasing, down from 31%. In 1989-1990, 23% of the teachers said that they always or frequently experienced that they did not receive the texts, workbooks, and other instructional materials they needed, whereas only 9% feel this way today. In 1989-1990, 49% of the teachers surveyed said that they always or frequently experienced job-related problems with custodial and maintenance services, compared with 10% in 1995-96. Six years ago, 30% said that their classrooms were dirty, poorly ventilated, or otherwise unusable, compared with 9%

Human resource development

The most significant changes in this area have to do with staff development and teamwork. Virtually everyone applauded the attention the district has paid to staff development. Interviews reveal that the district offers extensive staff development using a variety of formats, including support for attendance at conferences, tuition assistance, inservice courses, and summer workshops. Staff development associated with any program change is mandated and is provided to all affected staff and staff are paid for attendance. New hires are offered summer courses in these areas. According to respondents, the district backs up its professed commitment to curriculum and instruction innovation with a "terrific commitment" to provide teachers with the skills they need to implement changes. Not only is the quality of programs consistently high, but development efforts are on-going, not just the one-shot workshops that so many other districts offer. Respondents noted that in the past, individuals were

largely responsible for their own development, but today, the system supports growth. Change is achieved through staff development; programs support curriculum and instructional initiatives.

Survey data attest to the overall satisfaction with staff development: 90% of the teachers say they are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with professional development. Over 80% say that inservice helps them grow professionally, and nearly 80% say that it helps improve instruction and helps teachers understand the curriculum. Three of four teachers say that when new policies or programs are adopted, they receive the training needed to implement them, and over 90% say that overall, there are adequate mechanisms for professional growth and skill development.

In terms of teamwork and communication, ratings of the degree of teamwork changed considerably. In fact, all facets of teamwork seem to have improved. As an illustration, 73% of the teachers felt the statement, "Teachers are encouraged to turn to each other for help," is "very accurate," as compared to 44% previously. Over 90% said that teachers belong to a team that works well together in their school building, and a much higher percentage -- 78% as compared with 58% -- felt that teachers and administrators work well together as a team. Shared decision making is a priority in the district. A district-wide team has been convened as a result of a strategic objective to create a district plan for coordinating and more fully implementing the shared decision making process. In interviews, many teachers said that the district feels much less "top down" now than it did six years ago, and teachers are involved in all facets of curriculum and program development. The district tries to operate on the principle that those responsible for implementing decisions should be involved in making them.

As compared with six years ago, the survey reveals that a much higher percentage of teachers feel that teachers *should* be more heavily involved in decisions -- 91% feel this way as compared with 61%. About 70% say that decision making in their school is a collaborative process, as compared to 54% in 1989-1990, and 85% agree that they have a chance to participate in setting school goals (compared to 65%). A smaller percentage feel that teachers' advice might be ignored when it is asked for, but about half of the staff still feels this way.

Continuing challenges

Suburban experienced a remarkable degree of change, and many of these emerged in areas associated with the recommendations from the 1989-90 audit. Not all changes worked, though, and the district did not address every area touched on in the 1989-90 study. For example, many of the communications and teamwork issues that were revealed in the Middle School in the first audit persist; interdisciplinary teams are communications devices, little team teaching occurs, and staff still perceive the principal as controlling (although the principal was in his first year at the time of the first audit). The district has not to this day deciphered the extent to which they want the Middle School to engage in team teaching or the development of interdisciplinary curriculum. There are still questions about how special education "fits" into the overall district mission and strategic goals.

The change activity spawned new challenges and a new and different set of recommendations. The question confronting the district at this point is how to reinforce and sustain the types of changes put in place. That is, having addressed the basic infrastructure issues evident in 1989-1990, established a customer service focus, and implemented a strategic change process, what issues need to be addressed to *institutionalize* these innovations? Several recommendations stood out.

First, while the district placed an emphasis on the enhancement of language arts and math curriculum, and the implementation of more collaborative and learner-centered instructional methods, many questioned whether they are doing a better job delivering the "wrong content." That is, after a concerted effort to address instructional delivery, there are questions about whether the district is delivering a "21st century curriculum." Consequently, it was recommended that the district consider articulating learner outcomes that describe what students are expected to have mastered when they leave the district. The articulation of outcomes will affect the district's ability to integrate and coordinate programs across schools, better integrate the Middle School into change activity, provide the basis for integrating special education further into district activity, allow the effective evaluation of programs, and provide a potential focus for shared decision making activity. As a part of this recommendation, the

district needs to examine whether the traditional, five-year curriculum development cycle fits with current strategic directions, and clarify whether theming is, indeed, an operational goal (and if it is, outcomes will be important in terms of providing benchmarks and measures). A question that follows is whether it is tenable to continue to structure the curriculum function (and the Middle School) along traditional academic subject lines.

Second, questions still existed relating to the autonomy of the individual schools and coordination across buildings. It was recommended that the district consider more explicitly defining how "school-based" change is to become. This question relates to other operational questions, like whether the budget process needs to be amended, whether staff development can be more decentralized, how schedules might be amended from school-to-school to provide more flexibility, and so on. It is also important to continuing questions related to the implementation of shared decision making.

Third, sched· 'ing is still described by many as "the enemy," and many people agree that it is even more of an issue given the changes in the district. In particular, administrators and teachers alike said that finding time to work together is a serious obstacle to change. The new programs and approaches being implemented require a continued higher level of coordination. Regular classroom teachers, special education teachers and specialists must work more closely together as students needing special services remain in the classroom. Approaches like whole language require closer articulation and coordination of approaches across classrooms and from grade to grade. Time for coordination has to be built into "the system" rather than being treated as an "add on" that teachers may or may not "volunteer" to accept. The increasing diversity of the student population exacerbates these issues; students' needs are becoming more diverse, and as they do, the issue of pull-outs "becomes a monster." Yet, the movement toward a more integrated curriculum makes the notion of pull-outs less tenable: How can you pull students out for assistance in specific subjects when subject areas are being integrated? Many agree that conquering the schedule, and giving staff time to communicate, to plan collaboratively, and to share information, resources, and expertise, is one of the keys to reaching the "next level" of innovation. It was

recommended that experimentation with block scheduling should be supported, and alternative structures for providing special services while limiting pull-outs should be pursued.

Finally, it was recommended that key administrative functions be reconsidered in light of the district's innovations. As the district continues to change, some more "traditional" functions seem incongruent with future growth. Specifically, as some suggest, the budget process may need to be examined all over again to promote flexibility. The evaluation process may need to be revised to reflect new instructional approaches.

In sum, it is interesting to note the degree to which the recommendations contained in the 1995-96 report reflect a curriculum focus -- and a student focus. In each of the recommendations, growth appears to be associated with *further* innovation or adjustment of the education process. Few issues relate purely to operational matters. This is dramatically different than the 1989-1990 findings. Whereas in the first audit, staff wanted the bottlenecks removed so they could do as good a job as they were capable of doing, the types of "problems" identified in the more recent audit have to do with growth and reaching a higher standard, i.e., finding new and different ways to meet the district's strategic goals and objectives. People did not generally express the notion that change is "happening to them," but rather that they are *engaged in change* -- they are *empowered change agents* participating in the transformation of the district. This is typified by the level of involvement and experimentation in the implementation of a process-oriented curriculum and the use of more learner-centered methods of delivering instruction.

Summary and Conclusions

We started by pointing out that strategic planning in education focuses largely on an external scan and visioning activities. The "critical self-examination" associated with prevalent models is typically cursory. In our experience, an assessment of organizational structure and processes is more often seen as an *outcome* of the planning process, a *strategy to implement* as a part of the plan, than as a part of planning itself. We believe that this is a mistake, and that any organization can better use the data from an internal scan as information going into the planning process. As the case presented demonstrates, the

quality audit can be used to as a part of the initial stages of a strategic planning framework to assess a school system's capacity for change. It allows a district to take a broad, systemic view at existing programs, practices, and relationships to assess the efficacy of administrative structures and processes and their appropriateness for supporting future activities.

Suburban is an interesting case; initially, it was characterized as a good district, but one that was standing still. Insiders legitimately feared that some students were falling through the cracks, and questioned whether students were being prepared for the 21st century. Today, it is best characterized as an actively restructuring district, and bears many of the attributes of a true learning organization (Senge, 1990). Many of the specific findings presented may be shared by restructuring districts across the country. Suburban's struggle with issues relating to time for collaboration and scheduling, its difficulty ensuring a measure of congruence between curriculum development processes and instructional innovations, or the issue of designing site based processes to promote instructional innovations are emblematic of the types of problems confronting the most innovative districts nationwide. That Suburban is, today, an example of a school system that is actively restructuring is a story in itself, and demonstrates how a process like the quality audit can contribute to the success of strategic change initiatives.

Suburban clearly illustrates the three potential functions of the quality audit. First, in both iterations, it was used to highlight specific content areas in need of attention. Recommendations focused on improving the delivery of services in these areas. Second, the audit provided an opportunity for organizational insiders to collaborate in an open dialogue about change. Because the audit allows participants to reveal their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the system's problems in a safe environment, mediated by neutral researchers, previously taboo "undiscussable" issues were placed on the table for discussion. Using Argyris' (1985) terminology, participants made their theories of action explicit, often discovering that others in the system share similar thoughts, concerns, and motives. Third, beyond the specific findings, the audit served a symbolic purpose; it was an "event," a marker in time that signals a seriousness about the intent to change. It made change a legitimate topic for discussion.

The value of this cannot be over-stated; many of the operational changes in Suburban as a result of the first audit were called "simple" by administrators, but they felt that they needed a "green light" from the organization to discuss and take action on them.

Describing the characteristics of an effective school system is not at all the same as describing the processes needed to become one. In Suburban, the audit was the starting point for a set of processes defined by organizational insiders, using the data they received to help formulate their strategy. Further, the initial audit helped show system administrators that they had to do something to change people's taken-for-granted beliefs about their school district, and thus issues associated with reculturing -- including leadership development, team building, and inservice training -- were put on the table along with those dealing with the revision of organizational structures and processes. In the end, a more complete and effective change process resulted. If anything, the results reflected in the more recent study showed that while people's belief-states had changed appreciably, the district must now engage in restructuring. Participants are now perceiving certain aspects of structure as limiting their capacity for change, particularly in the Middle School.

In closing, a few points deserve to be made about the difficulties associated with conducting an audit, or put more positively, the factors we believe to be associated with successfully using the audit to promote change. First and foremost, our experience indicates that a district's readiness for change -- and openness to isolating issues in need of improvement -- are essential ingredients. Quite often, a change in leadership (as in Suburban) provides an occasion for this; the audit provides a snapshot of existing issues for a new superintendent. Second, an appreciation for the principles associated with quality contribute to success; the quality framework provides the conceptual foundation for the audit, and if you do not agree with or support these principles, it is unlikely you will consider the findings valid.

Third, involvement is key to the success of the audit, which by its very nature represents a methodology that involves practitioners in the creation of a *local* knowledge base, a set of information on *their* school system and its capacity for change and reform. Shedd and Bacharach (1991) describe the

"skillful practitioner" as a person who is able to use established knowledge and theory in analyzing problems in real life situations to develop alternatives for action. The audit is a tool for empowering school system managers to do just that.

Finally, the methodology requires two conceptual leaps in its implementation, the first involving synthesizing and examining the various data collected to isolate themes, and the second engaging in a dialogue with district staff to isolate recommendations to address these themes. The quality framework provides a model from which themes may be organized, and our experience in conducting audits has helped us develop a greater capacity in this regard. The role of external change agent is thus important to the audit process. Although we have also conducted an audit in a large, urban system in which we acted in a training and facilitation role and organizational members conducted the actual research, our experience was has shown that while the process can be conducted by insiders, district staff may be much less willing to engage in frank dialogue with organizational insiders. Like any organizational change, the audit is a political process; involving an external agent opens the dialogue (and provides those uninterested in the notion of change someone to blame outside of the system).

In any case, the audit process cannot occur without the support and involvement of organizational insiders. Cummings et al. (1985) suggested that organization design must be concerned with change dynamics and sense making processes, and that as a result, research conducted on organizational change must be particularly intensive and adaptive. The research process presented here is dynamic and includes the researcher as process consultant. Practitioners serve as expert sources in the development process and in the research design. The district steering committee works with researchers in analyzing data and making sense of the patterns across data sources. Overall, the quality audit may be more than an internal scan; it helps those involved operationalize quality in their districts. It involves organizational members at all levels, provides usable data to guide decision making, and focuses the system on continuous improvement. Along the way, organizational insiders develop the capacity to engage in ongoing assessments of their organizational systems, one of the hallmarks of total quality management.

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APPENDIX A

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

Appendix A contains a duplicate copy of the School Climate Survey with survey frequency percentages replacing the normal response the options. That is, instead of each item being followed by "1, 2, 3, 4," each is followed by the percentage of respondents that chose each response. As an example, in the first item, 28% of the respondents "agreed strongly" with the statement, "The district's curriculum goals, objectives, and priorities are clear." Another 63% "agree" with this statement, whereas 7% "disagree" and 1% "disagree strongly."

On these tables, response percentages from the 1989-90 School Climate Survey are indicated in parentheses. (Since some items were added for the 1995-96 version of the survey, there are items that do not have two sets of response percentages.)

Survey items allow us to discover how all respondents think and feel about the issues covered in the climate survey. The response patterns cannot inform us about *why* respondents feel the way they do; the data are best used to inform the interview and focus group findings and to focus subsequent discussions in the district around climate issues.

[Note that percentages are based on a total of 231 respondents to the 1995-96 survey and 143 to the 1989-90 survey.]

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[redacted]

This survey is part of a district review of the administrative operations of the [redacted] Schools. The survey asks for your opinions about various aspects of your work. The information you provide will help decide what areas warrant attention. Your input is very important to the success of this study. We hope the process will be of benefit to you, your colleagues, and the district as a whole.

On the following pages, you will find many different questions about your work. Please read them carefully. Most of the questions can be answered by circling a number 1 2 3 4. If you do not find the exact answer which fits your opinion, ***choose the one which comes closest to it.*** Please answer each question as honestly as possible. Feel free to write in any explanations or comments you may have in the space provided at the end of the questionnaire.

Your answers to these questions are strictly confidential. The analysis of the survey is being performed by an independent contractor. Only group results will be reported.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Curriculum and Instruction Policies

1. The following section deals specifically with curriculum goals, objectives and priorities. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a. The district's curriculum goals, objectives and priorities are clear.	28	63	7	1
b. I generally agree with this district's curriculum goals, objectives and priorities.	25 (16)	67 (78)	7 (5)	0 (1)
c. Goals relating to student achievement are set so that they are challenging.	25 (13)	66 (75)	8 (1)	0 (1)
d. Goals relating to student achievement are set so that they are attainable for most students.	16 (10)	77 (78)	8 (11)	0 (1)
e. My school has a set of objectives that specify what students are expected to attain over a specified period of time.	16 (9)	72 (76)	12 (13)	0 (1)
f. The curriculum is appropriate considering the demographics of the community and the needs of our students.	21 (10)	70 (71)	9 (17)	0 (2)
g. There are adequate extra-curricular and co-curricular programs available to students.	30 (15)	39 (52)	30 (28)	2 (6)

2. The following questions concern the administration of curriculum and instruction policies. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a. Curriculum planning and revision in this district is a smooth, on-going process.	13 (7)	58 (42)	25 (35)	4 (17)
b. When new curriculum or instructional policies are adopted, teachers get the training needed to implement them.	25	50	19	6

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Entries reflect % of total for 1995-96 respondents (1993-96 [illegible]

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
c. Faculty members and administrators regularly review progress toward meeting curriculum goals and objectives.	13 (4)	60 (43)	24 (40)	3 (14)
d. Administrators closely monitor teachers' observance of curriculum and instruction policies.	12	55	28	5
e. Curriculum is generally well coordinated across different subject areas.	11	51	35	3
f. Curriculum is generally well coordinated between regular and special education classes/programs.	5	43	47	5
g. Curriculum is generally well coordinated between schools at the same level.	4 (3)	66 (45)	25 (34)	5 (18)*
h. Curriculum is generally well coordinated between schools at different levels.	3	52	39	6

Working Conditions

1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a. District goals and objectives are clearly communicated to teachers.	26 (20)	64 (59)	9 (19)	1 (2)
b. I know what my school's goals and objectives are.	23 (21)	68 (62)	8 (15)	0 (2)
c. I generally agree with my school's goals and objectives.	20 (22)	75 (69)	5 (8)	0 (1)
d. My school's goals and objectives are consistent with district goals and objectives.	27	67	6	1
e. The teachers in my school have a common set of priorities indicating which goals and objectives take precedence when two or more come into conflict.	12 (7)	56 (47)	28 (38)	4 (7)
f. Priorities change too frequently and are sometimes hard to keep track of.	9 (11)	32 (36)	56 (46)	4 (8)

2. For each statement please circle the response that best describes your job:

	Definitely true	Tends to be true	Tends to be false	Definitely false
a. I often work under incompatible guidelines and policies.	4 (11)	16 (21)	54 (52)	26 (16)
b. I often receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	3 (8)	17 (21)	53 (53)	27 (18)
c. I often receive instructions without adequate resources and materials to execute them.	7 (11)	18 (25)	52 (56)	24 (9)

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	Definitely true	Tends to be true	Tends to be false	Definitely false
d. I work under vague directions or orders.	7 (10)	14 (25)	56 (51)	23 (14)
e. There is simply too much material to cover in my grade level or subject area curriculum.	20 (21)	34 (36)	36 (38)	10 (5)
f. There isn't enough time during the regular workday to do everything that's expected of me.	40 (50)	41 (38)	16 (9)	3 (3)
g. I know what is expected of me.	47 (32)	48 (52)	4 (14)	1 (2)
h. Sometimes I feel like I'm being buried with paperwork.	31 (52)	42 (31)	25 (15)	2 (1)
i. I have a lot of discretion over what content I will cover in the classes I teach.	31	48	18	4
j. I have a lot of discretion over the methods I use in my teaching.	37	53	8	2
k. District regulations make sense and support my work.	19 (9)	68 (74)	12 (16)	0 (1)
l. Policies and procedures are implemented in the same manner for all staff.	14 (6)	51 (53)	23 (27)	12 (14)
m. There are well defined procedures specifying the proper channels of communication in most matters.	17 (8)	54 (57)	25 (28)	4 (7)
n. New policies and procedures are often adopted without an adequate assessment of their impact on existing ones.	11 (17)	41 (43)	44 (38)	5 (3)
o. Little advanced planning is done in this district.	4 (12)	9 (33)	62 (46)	24 (9)
p. We always seem to be reacting to crisis situations.	4 (16)	15 (32)	58 (42)	24 (9)

3. Like employees of any organization, teachers need a variety of resources in order to perform their jobs. For each of the following resource situations, please circle the number that comes closest to indicating how often that situation poses a problem for you in performing your job:

	Always or almost always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom or never
a. I don't have all of the textbooks, workbooks, or other instructional materials I need.	2 (4)	7 (19)	35 (54)	57 (24)
b. My instructional materials are outdated or otherwise poor in quality.	0 (2)	6 (9)	23 (34)	71 (56)
c. The materials I need are made available to me too late to make good use of them.	0 (3)	1 (9)	27 (47)	71 (41)
d. I cannot get the equipment I need for an activity I have planned.	1 (3)	3 (8)	26 (38)	70 (51)
e. The equipment I need is broken, unusable, or otherwise poor in quality.	1 (2)	1 (8)	12 (33)	87 (57)
f. There isn't enough space for group or individual instruction of students.	15 (23)	16 (24)	33 (31)	36 (22)
g. There isn't enough space to store materials and/or supplies.	20 (34)	29 (30)	25 (16)	26 (19)

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	Always or almost always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom or never
h. Classroom or activity space is in disrepair.	3 (14)	4 (8)	26 (32)	68 (46)
i. The school grounds or buildings are unsafe.	1 (5)	1 (3)	14 (24)	84 (68)
j. It's too noisy in my school building.	1 (6)	5 (11)	35 (29)	59 (54)
k. The school is dirty, poorly ventilated or otherwise unsuitable for learning.	3 (11)	6 (20)	22 (36)	68 (33)
l. I cannot get adequate assistance from teacher aides.	11 (21)	5 (11)	9 (16)	76 (51)
m. I cannot get adequate clerical help when I need it.	7 (17)	7 (15)	23 (24)	64 (44)
n. I cannot get adequate advice or assistance from specialists.	1 (7)	6 (20)	33 (32)	60 (42)
o. It takes too long to get advice or assistance from specialists.	2 (10)	14 (24)	34 (39)	50 (28)
p. I cannot get adequate information about my students' needs, abilities, or previous progress when I need it.	3	6	34	58

4. How often do problems with the services provided by each of the following district office departments or functions pose a problem for you in performing your job?

	Always or almost always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom or never
a. Budget / Accounting	0 (5)	8 (18)	37 (39)	55 (38)
b. Purchasing	2 (5)	14 (26)	39 (45)	45 (24)
c. Payroll/Benefits	0 (2)	5 (6)	26 (23)	68 (68)
d. Custodial & Maintenance	1 (17)	9 (32)	36 (29)	54 (21)
e. Transportation	1 (2)	2 (5)	19 (22)	78 (71)
f. Food Service	4 (3)	7 (6)	25 (20)	64 (71)
g. Special Services (e.g., Special Education, Psychology, Social Work)	4 (12)	14 (21)	36 (39)	46 (29)
h. Curriculum and Instruction	1 (1)	4 (6)	33 (44)	62 (49)
i. Staff Development	1 (5)	4 (8)	30 (38)	65 (49)
j. Media Services	0 (2)	3 (4)	15 (31)	82 (64)

5. The following items deal with your classroom environment and your students. Please indicate how true each of the following statements is in your work situation:

	Definitely true	Tends to be true	Tends to be false	Definitely false
a Classes are too large.	17 (25)	21 (37)	42 (29)	21 (9)
b. Classes are too frequently interrupted.	16 (14)	28 (38)	46 (41)	10 (9)
c. Students are pulled out of classes too often.	22 (23)	38 (36)	32 (35)	8 (6)
d. Students are too frequently absent from class or tardy.	4 (8)	11 (13)	55 (52)	30 (27)

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Entries reflect % of total for 1995-96 respondents (1993-94 respondents / total sample)

	Definitely true	Tends to be true	Tends to be false	Definitely false
e. Students have insufficient background knowledge for the classes you are teaching.	3 (2)	9 (8)	66 (67)	22 (24)
f. Students are abnormally unruly.	0 (3)	7 (3)	48 (46)	44 (49)

Decision-making

1. The following items deal with the decision-making process in your school and school district. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a. Teachers should be more heavily involved in making school and district decisions that affect their work.	41 (11)	50 (54)	9 (35)	0 (1)
b. Decision-making in my school is a collaborative process.	10 (2)	60 (52)	27 (37)	3 (9)
c. Teachers have an opportunity to participate in defining school goals, objectives, and priorities.	23 (5)	62 (60)	13 (30)	3 (5)
d. Decision-makers may ask for teachers' advice before they make a decision, but they do not seem to give teachers' recommendations serious consideration.	19 (17)	32 (48)	45 (35)	5 (1)
e. Too few teachers take advantage of opportunities to participate in decision-making.	6 (8)	38 (47)	52 (42)	5 (3)

2. Based on your experience, how adequate are the opportunities available to you to *participate* in decision-making in each of the following areas:

	Very adequate	Somewhat adequate	Not very adequate	Not at all adequate
a. Setting district goals and objectives.	23	54	17	7
b. Setting school goals and objectives.	37	48	10	5
c. Budget development/priority setting.	11	32	38	18
d. Facility planning.	11	41	32	16
e. Inservice training and staff development.	27	43	20	10
f. Staff assignments.	11	43	25	22
g. Curriculum planning.	31	48	16	6
h. Class/course scheduling.	12	36	29	22
i. Student placement/promotion.	24	48	19	9
j. Policies and programs for students with special needs.	12	48	28	12
k. Student rights/discipline policies.	17	41	32	9
l. Standardized testing policies.	19	54	20	7
m. Grading policies/practices.	26	52	17	4
n. Policies concerning relationships with parents.	22	54	18	6

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The questions in this section deal with your relationship with your *building principal.*

1. How adequate is the time you have to speak on a one-to-one basis with your principal?

36 (21)	39 (42)	19 (28)	6 (10)
Very adequate	Somewhat adequate	Somewhat inadequate	Very inadequate

2. When you speak on a one-to-one basis with your principal, how often does he/she talk to you in the following ways?

	Always or almost always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom or never
a. Shows appreciation for your work.	42 (17)	26 (35)	23 (33)	10 (16)
b. Shows confidence in you.	48 (25)	28 (42)	19 (27)	5 (6)
c. Explains things.	36 (18)	35 (39)	25 (38)	4 (4)
d. Gives helpful information or suggestions.	32 (16)	31 (37)	29 (39)	9 (8)
e. Asks for your opinions or suggestions.	31 (15)	28 (32)	27 (36)	15 (17)
f. Asks you for information, clarification or explanation.	32 (14)	32 (26)	28 (45)	8 (15)
g. Asks for your advice on a decision he/she must make.	19 (4)	23 (24)	28 (44)	31 (28)
h. Clarifies what is expected of you.	27 (13)	30 (35)	28 (42)	15 (10)
i. Indicates an awareness of what you do in the classroom.	27 (14)	31 (32)	26 (37)	17 (16)
j. Provides helpful feedback on your performance.	30 (14)	26 (44)	26 (27)	18 (15)

3. In your opinion, how accurate is your principal's perception of how well you perform your job?

46 (32)	43 (54)	8 (9)	3 (5)
Very accurate	Somewhat accurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Very inaccurate

4. How often does your principal observe you working?

1 (2)	12 (8)	24 (22)	64 (69)
Several times a day	Several times a week	Several times a month	Monthly or less often

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5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a. My principal is available to see me when I need to see him/her.	29 (12)	56 (52)	13 (29)	2 (7)
b. My principal is highly visible around the school and makes many contacts with students and staff.	21	43	29	8
c. I would seek assistance from my principal more often, but he/she is already overworked.	4 (11)	20 (32)	62 (49)	14 (8)
d. My principal goes to bat for his/her subordinates.	27 (8)	57 (63)	12 (20)	3 (9)
e. My principal represents his/her staff well with the central office.	26 (13)	60 (62)	11 (18)	3 (7)

6. The following questions deal with **district administration**. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
a. Administrators are available to see me when I need to see them.	11	67	21	1
b. Administrators are highly visible around the school and make many contacts with students and staff.	4	34	50	12
c. Extra efforts by staff are acknowledged and/or rewarded by administrators.	6	44	39	12
d. There is evidence of instructional planning on the part of district and school administrators.	17	64	16	3
e. District administrators indicate an awareness of what goes on in the classroom.	7	55	31	8

Professional Development

1. Please indicate how true each of the following statements is, in your own experience:

	Definitely true	Tends to be true	Tends to be false	Definitely false
a. Inservice training and other staff development programs in this district help teachers grow professionally.	43	40	14	4
b. Inservice training and other staff development programs in this district help improve instruction.	40	38	19	3
c. Staff development programs help teachers understand and implement the district's curriculum.	39	39	18	4

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	Definitely true	Tends to be true	Tends to be false	Definitely false
d. The district devotes sufficient time to staff development programs.	37	46	12	4
e. I receive an annual performance evaluation.	86 (95)	13 (4)	0 (1)	0 (0)
f. Performance evaluation procedures in this district help teachers grow professionally.	36 (12)	49 (53)	13 (27)	2 (8)
g. Teachers know the criteria and standards on which they will be evaluated.	52 (33)	40 (52)	7 (12)	0 (3)
h. Evaluation criteria and standards used in this district are valid indicators of a teacher's performance or skills.	29 (10)	49 (57)	18 (29)	4 (4)
i. The appropriate person is responsible for evaluating your performance.	45 (37)	40 (53)	13 (9)	3 (1)
j. Evaluators have enough information on which to base their judgements about your performance.	28 (10)	48 (60)	21 (23)	2 (7)
k. Evaluation procedures are implemented in the same manner for all staff.	38 (13)	48 (66)	11 (13)	4 (8)

2. Overall, how adequate are the mechanisms for professional growth and skill development offered by your district?

Very adequate	Somewhat adequate	Somewhat inadequate	Very inadequate
45 (30)	46 (42)	6 (19)	3 (9)

Teamwork and Coordination

1. For each statement, please circle the response that indicates how accurate or inaccurate you think that statement is, based on your own experience:

	Very accurate	Somewhat accurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Very inaccurate
a. Teachers are encouraged to turn to each other for help.	73 (44)	22 (38)	4 (13)	1 (4)
b. Teachers receive the help they need from administrators when problems arise.	29 (16)	54 (62)	16 (16)	2 (5)
c. Teachers in this school frequently share information about how they teach.	53 (40)	36 (37)	9 (15)	2 (8)
d. More experienced teachers often provide advice and materials to new teachers.	58 (41)	36 (45)	4 (8)	2 (7)
e. Most teacners try to be innovative.	63	34	3	0
f. Honest mistakes are forgiven, rather than held against people.	45 (4)	44 (54)	9 (32)	2 (10)
g. Teachers have ample time to meet to share information and discuss mutual problems and concerns.	13 (3)	24 (20)	35 (38)	28 (39)

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	Very accurate	Somewhat accurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Very inaccurate
h. Teachers in this school belong to a team which works well together.	47 (32)	44 (42)	6 (21)	3 (5)
i. Committee memberships are open to all interested staff members.	63	34	2	1
j. Staff members in this school seldom have disagreements that interfere with their work.	37	51	10	3
k. When disagreements arise in this school, staff members have effective ways of resolving them.	33	55	11	2
l. Teachers in my department or work unit belong to a team which works well together.	57	32	8	4
m. My department or grade level has regular meetings which provide me with information I need to do my job.	40 (9)	36 (32)	16 (36)	8 (22)
n. School-wide faculty meetings provide me with information I need to do my job.	24	47	22	7
o. Teachers who teach the same subject or grade level often discuss instruction and curriculum issues.	46 (4)	40 (33)	10 (37)	5 (25)
p. Teachers and administrators in this district work well together as a team.	29 (8)	49 (50)	16 (33)	6 (9)
q. The school board and administrators in this district work well together as a team.	25 (0)	61 (54)	12 (30)	2 (16)
r. Central administrators and principals in this district work well together as a team.	27 (6)	63 (64)	9 (23)	1 (7)
s. Parents generally work closely with teachers on questions that concern their own child's education.	34	55	11	1
t. Parents are generally active in district, school and/or class programs.	47	45	7	1

2. Based on your experience, how well informed are you about each of the following:

	Very well informed	Somewhat well informed	Not very well informed	Not at all well informed
a. State education policies and programs.	9 (15)	58 (49)	30 (32)	3 (5)
b. School board decisions.	24 (26)	57 (56)	18 (15)	1 (4)**
c. Decisions of district administrators.	23	55	20	2
d. Activities or decisions of district-level committees or task forces.	18	61	19	2
e. Programs and practices in other schools.	3 (3)	35 (23)	53 (55)	8 (20)
f. Decisions of administrators in your school.	33 (35)	51 (53)	16 (10)	0 (1)**
g. Activities or decisions of committees or task forces in your school.	32	56	12	0
h. Concerns, needs, and/or interests of parents.	33	52	13	2

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Entries are "last %" of total for 1995-96 respondents (1989-90 respondents), page 2

3. Overall, how adequate is the information you receive in terms of what you need to know to perform your job?

39 (20)	52 (63)	9 (17)	0 (1)
Very adequate	Somewhat adequate	Somewhat inadequate	Very inadequate

4. Based on your experience, how adequate are the mechanisms available to you for voicing your opinions about each of the following?

	Very adequate	Somewhat adequate	Not very adequate	Not at all adequate
a. State education policies and programs.	8 (2)	38 (28)	45 (46)	9 (24)
b. School board decisions.	7 (6)	43 (53)	42 (28)	8 (12)***
c. Decisions of district administrators.	7	44	40	9
d. Decisions of district-level committees or task forces.	11	55	29	5
e. Decisions of administrators in your school.	16 (11)	53 (61)	25 (20)	5 (7)***
f. Decisions of committees or task forces in your school.	20	61	16	2

5. Overall, how adequate are the mechanisms available for voicing your opinions about policies, practices, or situations that affect your work?

12	59	25	5
Very adequate	Somewhat adequate	Somewhat inadequate	Very inadequate

Work Outcomes

1. In general, how satisfied are you with each of the following:

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
a. The chance your job gives you to do what you are best at.	66 (39)	32 (46)	2 (13)	0 (2)
b. The progress you are making toward the goals you set for yourself in your present position.	59 (28)	37 (57)	3 (15)	0 (1)
c. The extent to which conditions enable you to be an effective teacher.	41 (15)	43 (46)	12 (30)	4 (9)
d. Your opportunity to contribute to important decisions.	32 (8)	44 (59)	21 (24)	4 (8)
e. Your opportunity for professional development.	50 (26)	40 (51)	8 (18)	2 (5)
f. The overall quality of education this district provides to its students.	65 (47)	32 (46)	3 (6)	0 (1)

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	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
g. The recognition you receive for your efforts.	29 (13)	45 (47)	20 (21)	7 (20)
h. Your students' progress.	46	52	2	0
i. Community respect and support for the school system.	30 (15)	57 (42)	11 (28)	2 (16)

2. If you could go back to your college days and start over again, would you (circle one):

44 (22)	32 (31)	13 (24)	9 (17)	3 (6)
Certainly become a teacher again	Probably become a teacher again	Chances about even for and against	Probably not become a teacher again	Certainly not become a teacher again

3. Which of the following best describes your career plans over the next three years?

76 (72)	Plan to continue teaching in this school
13 (10)	Plan to seek a transfer to another teaching position in this district
2 (-)	Plan to seek a teaching/administrative position in another district
1 (4)	Plan to seek a non-teaching position in this or another school district
1 (1)	Plan to seek a permanent position outside of education
3 (8)	Plan to retire or resign from full-time employment
1 (1)	Plan to leave teaching temporarily with the intention of returning
3 (4)	Other

4. Which of the following aspects of work do you think need the most attention, either because they pose particular problems or because they represent areas where significant opportunities for improvement exist in the district? (circle up to five numbers)

6	District goals, objectives, & priorities	14	Clarifying roles and responsibilities
6	School goals, objectives & priorities	14	Promoting working relationships among teachers
26	Professional growth and development	26	Coordination among schools
24	Staff participation in decision-making	3	Improvement of instruction
21	Administrator/teacher relations	19	Curriculum development/articulation
4	District/school relations	19	Enhancing the quality of the existing curriculum
9	Relationships with the school board	5	Equitable distribution of learning opportunities
10	Relationships with parents	13	Expectations of and for students
17	Communication of information	9	Student placement, guidance, promotion
35	Student behavior, discipline	13	Grading, testing, tracking student progress
48	Course scheduling, time management	29	Minimizing disruptions to instruction/class time
8	Equipment/material resources	23	Programs for students with special needs
23	Facility planning, space usage	16	Recognition and rewards
	Other (please specify):		

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1. What is your home school (please circle one):

Total number of surveys: 231. Number from each school:

2. Which best describes your current assignment:

132 (59%)	Regular classroom teacher
28 (13%)	Special education teacher
38 (17%)	Special area teacher (art, music, physical education)
20 (9%)	Pupil Services (psychologist, social worker, counselor, school nurse)
6 (3%)	Other (please specify:_____)

3. The district last used this survey in a similar study undertaken during the 1989-1990 school year. Since it would be useful to compare the opinions of those who were employed by the district during the past study with those who came to the district since that time, please place a check mark (✓) in the space below if you took your job with the district after the 1989-1990 school year:

99 individuals (43% of the total) took my job with the district after the 1989-1990 school year

Thank you for your cooperation. We would welcome additional comments you may have.

(34 individuals or 15% of the total wrote comments on their surveys.)

Notes:

* Item 2(g) on page 2: 1989-90 survey item was more general than 1995-96 item. Compare percentages to items 2(g) and 2(h).

** Items 2(b) and 2(f) on page 9: 1989-90 survey items were more general than 1995-96 items. Compare percentages reported under (b) for 1989-90 to items (b,c,d) in the present survey, and (f) to items (f, g).

*** Items 4(b) and 4(e) on page 10: 1989-90 survey items were more general than 1995-96 items. Compare percentages reported under (b) for 1989-90 to items (b,c,d) in the present survey, and (e) to items (e,f).

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DISTRICT INTERVIEW FORMAT

The purpose of the review is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current organization structure, and its ability to support the strategic plan. We are conducting interviews with district administrative staff and a sample of school administrators and school staff. The interviews will be used to identify issues or areas of common or specific concern. We will prepare a draft report which summarizes and makes recommendations for addressing each issue.

All of the interviews are confidential. No individual responses will be reported; we are looking for common themes or issues.

We hope you will take this opportunity to express your views on the operation of the district.

POSITION

- ☐ Can you tell me a little bit about your **background**, how you came to this position?
- ☐ Can you please describe the **scope of operations** in this department/unit? What exactly goes on here, e.g., services, number of staff, etc.?
- ☐ What are the primary **responsibilities in your position**?
  - ► Any job has a mix of essential tasks and **needless tasks**. What are you doing that you feel is unnecessary?
- ☐ A lot of different factors may constrain our performance, prevent us from doing as well as we would like. What do you see as the **primary frustrations/constraints** in your position?
- ☐ In fulfilling our responsibilities, it is generally necessary for us to work with other people, i.e., we rely on others for we receive input from others, others assist us in processing, and the outcomes of our efforts are often used by others in fulfilling their responsibilities. **Who do you work with** in fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to your position?
- ☐ Who are the primary **clients for your services**, i.e., whom does your work effect most directly?

For curriculum staff:

- ☐ Can you describe the **process of curriculum development** in this district?
  - ► **Implementation** is often the weakest part of curriculum. What do you do to ensure the curriculum is implemented?
  - ► How do you **ensure continuity** in the curriculum across grades and between schools?
  - ► Do you **align the curriculum** with any external or district **standards**?
  - ► How do you **assess the curriculum**?

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COMMUNICATION, PLANNING, DECISION MAKING

- ☐ How adequate are the mechanism for **keeping you informed** about changes in policies and procedures? What mechanisms do you rely on to stay informed?
- ☐ Do you feel **adequately involved in decisions** affecting your work? What mechanisms do you use to **voice** your opinions?
  - ► Who do you go to when you want to influence a decision or need to get something done? Who are the influential groups? Individuals?
- ☐ The effective development, implementation, and evaluation of policies requires a great degree of communication and coordination among staff. How would you **assess the level of communication and coordination** among:
  - ► District staff
  - ► District/school staff
  - ► Across schools
  - ► Prompt: How would you assess the degree of teamwork among administrators (at the central office, across levels)?
- ☐ Is there a **common sense of a district mission**, i.e., a set of common goals and priorities?
  - ► How are the **goals and objectives set** or determined in the district?
  - ► What do you know about **strategic plan**? Has the plan had any impact on your position yet?
- ☐ Perhaps one of the most pressing issues confronting all districts is to obtain all of the **resources necessary to support programs** and services.
  - ► How are **resource priorities** set in this district?
- ☐ How does your unit **measure its progress in achieving its goals and objectives**? Does it have a specific set of standards and indicators to assess progress?

STRUCTURE

We would like to consider different roles and functions in the district. I am going to read a list of functions or positions. We would like to know if there are any **ways in which each could improve their performance**?

- ☐ Curriculum and Instruction
- ☐ Staff Development
- ☐ Computer/Technology, Media Services
- ☐ Special Services (Special Education, Psychology, Social Work)
- ☐ Personnel
- ☐ Public Relations

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- ☐ Custodial Services
- ☐ Maintenance
- ☐ Food Service
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Purchasing
- ☐ Budget / accounting
- ☐ Board
- ☐ Superintendent
- ☐ Principals; Assistant Principals
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Community and Parents

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION

- ☐ What factors do you use to **evaluate your performance**? Are there objectives, standards, evaluations, or other means of assessing your performance?
- ☐ How does **performance evaluation** provide you with the opportunity to learn new skills or enhance your capabilities?
- ☐ How does **staff development** provide you with the opportunity to learn new skills or enhance your capabilities?
- ☐ Is there a program or mechanisms for **recognizing exceptional performance** and achievement? What types of behavior are explicitly or implicitly valued and rewarded? What incentives are offered for improved performance?

SUMMARY

- ☐ What would you like to do that you aren't doing now that would benefit both you and the district?
- ☐ If you could see **three changes** made in the way the district operates, what would they be?

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